

TELECOMMUNICATION POLICY



Effective Date: 20 June 2018

Resolution nr: 709/2018

1. INTRODUCTION

Telephone expenditure is one of the major expenses of Municipalities; Naledi Local Municipality strives to keep telephone expenditure within limits, as well as to reduce low productivity resulting from private calls including time spent of official calls, while ensuring effective communication.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is as follows:

- 2.1. To ensure the effective and efficient use of municipal telephone equipment;
- 2.2. To curb the abuse of Municipal telephones by officials of the council;
- 2.3. To minimise telephone costs;
- 2.4. To prevent the use of Municipal telephones by unauthorized persons;
- 2.5. To regulate what is permissible when using council resources
- 2.6. To outline expected recourse for misuse of telephone;
- 2.7. To ensure that relevant users bear the cost of using municipal telephone services for private use.
- 2.8. To minimise lost time due to employees devoting council time in pursuit of personal or private interests;
- 2.9 To provide qualifying officials and Councillor with the use of cellular phones for effective communication and timely response to matters of service delivery and attending to customer queries in an effective economical manner.

3. APPLICATION

- 3.1 This policy shall apply to all permanent and non-permanent employees of the municipality, and is relevant to the municipality's office based land line telephones-
- 3.2 This policy applies to use of cellular phones for the purpose of official communication.

4. LEGISLATION

- 4.1. Section 62 & 78 of Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act No.56 of 2003; places an onus on municipal officials to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the resources of the municipality are used effectively, efficiently and economically
- 4.2. The Act requires the officials to take effective and appropriate steps to prevent, with their area of responsibility, any unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure
- 4.3. And any under collection of revenue due to the municipality.
- 4.4. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa further imposes a responsibility on the municipality to operate effectively.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The Telephone policy seeks to regulate the usage of the Municipality's telephone and facsimile to ensure that telephones are available and are used for the conduct of official municipal business, in the direct support of assigned duties and responsibilities of users, and the delivery of municipal services.

6. PROVISION OF TELEPHONE SERVICE

6.1. It is the responsibility of Council to provide all municipal offices or a combination of municipal offices with a reliable and satisfactory telephone service

6.2. Council may centralise its telephone operating system through which all outgoing and incoming calls shall be routed.

6.3. The municipal switchboard(s) shall be housed in a safe and secure environment and the switchboard instrument as well as the office in which the switchboard is housed shall be provided with lockable device(s); the keys of which shall be in the possession of a person designated by the Accounting Officer.

6.4. It shall be the responsibility of the switchboard operator to ensure that no unauthorised person obtains access to the switchboard.

7. TELEPHONE USAGE CONTROL MEASURES

7.1. Each qualifying official shall be allocated a secret telephone access pin code signed for and known to the employee who will be responsible for its protection at all times

7.2. The Pin code is for use by a single person only; that individual is responsible and liable for the usage of the pin code.

7.3. Should an official suspect that his/her code has been used by another person; that official must report the matter immediately to the Senior Administration officer or a designated person who may upon consideration through a specified operating procedure issue or authorise the reissue of a new pin code.

7.4. The custodian of the pin code is still liable for any cost arising out of calls by someone who fraudulently obtained it.

7.5. Reissuing of pin codes as contemplated under 6.2.3 above shall be limited to 2 occurrences per annum.

7.6. Management may change pin codes frequently to mitigate risks.

7.7. It shall be at the discretion of the Council to provide an electronic device for the monitoring of all outgoing telephone calls.

7.8. Private calls shall not be allowed except during situations of emergency.

7.9. Each user should be able to identify private calls made by him/her at the end of each month, and the official may request a print-out of all calls made from the Telephone Management System.

7.10. The Finance Department shall, on the basis of information supplied in respect of private calls made by an official; deduct from such an employee's salary the full cost of private calls made including VAT for the month.

7.11. In general, the duration of a single call should not be more than 5 Minutes.

8. CALL RESTRICTIONS

8.1. Officials shall only be entitled to make international calls with the specific approval of the Municipal Manager.

8.2. The Municipal Manager has the discretion to determine which officials with direct dialling facilities shall be allowed to make international, national, provincial and local calls only; and telephone lines shall be suitably barred on the basis of this classification.

8.3. The Municipal Manager shall assign each user to a category and monthly budget (usage limit) and any user who is not satisfied may request the MM to review his/her category.

8.4. A user shall not exceed the budget to which he/she is assigned and when such user reaches the budget allocated to him/her category; his/her telephone line shall be suspended. A monthly budget shall not be accumulative.

8.5. The telephone system is programmed to "bar" all outgoing calls once the allocated monthly budget is exceeded until the following month.

8.6. The "barred" telephone user will continue to receive incoming calls.

8.7. The Municipal Manager shall review the categories and the assignment of users to such categories including the budget as and when he/she considers it necessary, but shall do so at least once in every financial year.

8.8. Notwithstanding 8.5 above, the Director of the user may request for the lifting of the 'bar' for the official who has exceeded the limit to the MM; if that user demonstrates that there are exceptional circumstances which justify the budget being exceeded.

8.9. Personal Assistants/Secretaries will not receive a call limit.

9. PRIVATE CALLS

9.1. The municipality recognises that there may be occasions normally due to circumstances or an emergency where it is necessary for members of staff to make private calls

9.2. Staff should be aware, however, that the making of or receiving private telephone calls is by local arrangement only and is, therefore, a privilege and not an automatic right. The municipality is therefore not obliged to provide allowance for private calls by officials.

9.3. When making or receiving private telephone calls, officials should take into account the following regulations:

9.3.1. The making/receiving of private telephone calls shall be kept to a minimum and short duration;

9.3.2. Private telephone calls should be timed whenever possible to ensure minimum disruption both to the work of the individual and to the workload of colleagues;

9.3.3. It is not acceptable for staff to conduct regular, private business or administration using the municipality's telephone network.

9.3.4. Any such abuse of the telephone system could result in the instances being considered to be of fraudulent nature, which may lead to disciplinary or criminal action against an official.

9.3.5. Such abuse could also result in the withdrawal of the facility to make private telephone calls.

9.3.6. The telephone system is an organisational resource and use of the telephone can and may be monitored.

10. TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

10.1. Switchboard operators must be multi-lingual and answer the telephone in a clear and concise voice. Their voice has to be very pleasant while interacting with the other person over the phone and should always answer with a good morning or good afternoon.

10.2. Incoming calls must be picked up as soon as possible.

10.3. All users must refrain from using obscene language;

10.4. Incoming calls must be handled with courtesy and should be directed to relevant people or department.

10.5 Switchboard operators must be informed if the official leaves the office to ensure calls re-directed to the office does not go unanswered.

10.6. All employees are expected to re-direct incoming calls incorrectly put through to them, to the relevant person or cluster.

10.7. After completing the conversation the person should not just hang up. The operator must confirm with the receiver whether he has downloaded the correct information or not and do end the conversation with pleasant words like "Take care", "nice speaking with you" and a warm bye. Never say Goodbye.

11. TELEPHONE PINS (PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS)

11.1 Office based staff, who do not receive a cellphone allowance, may be issued with a pin to make use of the landlines.

11.2 The purpose of the issuance of a pin is:

11.2.1 To allow for office based personnel to communicate with service providers, other government departments etc.

11.2.2 To serve as a tool of trade to enable performance of their work.

11.3 A monetary limit is linked to each Pin. This limit is determined by an evaluation by the Head of Department as to the need of the individual to communicate outside the municipality.

11.4 Should an employee's pin expire before the end of the month, the following procedure must be followed:

11.4.1 The telephone account for the relevant pin number is printed.

11.4.2 All calls made are scrutinized.

11.4.3 If the Head of Department is satisfied that the use in excess of the pin is in fact work-related, a motivation to increase the limit may be done.

11.4.4 Employees receiving Cellphone allowances who also need access to a landline may also apply for the allocation of a pin. The necessity must be clearly given and has to be approved by the Municipal Manager for approval.

11.4.4 The increase or allocation of a pin may be temporary or permanent.

11.5. In the event that is found that an official misuses the telephone, that official must be reported and will be dealt with in accordance with the penalties and procedures laid down by the Municipal Manager.

12. QUALIFYING OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS FOR CELLPHONE ALLOWANCES

12.1 The Cellphone allowances are allocated as follows:

Qualifying Member	Monthly Allowance
Municipal Mayor, Speaker and Councillors	As per the applicable Government Gazette issued annually regarding Upper Limits.
Municipal Manager	R1200.00
Directors (Senior Managers)	R750
Management (Task Grade 14 to 16)	R500
Field Workers	Motivated to the Municipal Manager to a maximum of R430.00

12.2 Cellphone Allowances are paid to qualifying members as part of their monthly salary and it is the responsibility of the incumbent to purchase a cellular phone or take out a cellphone contract.

12.3 Field Workers who daily need to make phone calls in line of duty whilst out of the office must apply in writing for a cellphone allowance.

12.4 Cellphone allowances to Fieldworkers must be motivated by the Head of Department and authorised by the Municipal Manager. Motivation must include the amount required based on the duties of the incumbent and cannot exceed R430.00 per month.

12.5 All recipients to Cellphone Allowances must:

12.5.1 Be accessible telephonically in working hours

12.5.2 Be accessible telephonically while on Standby

12.6 Cellphone use in excess of the limit set is to the account of the Cellphone Allowance Recipient.

13 DATA AND DEVICES

13.1 Due to the requirement to possess and make use of devices, officials with such a need can write a request to the Municipal Manager. This request must:

13.1.1 Be endorsed by the Head of the Department.

13.1.2 Clearly indicate why the device is required and why the office based internet cannot be utilised.

13.2 Only the Municipal Manager can approve such a request.

13.3 The allowance is limited as follows: Data Plan with at least 2 Gig limited to an allowance of R450.

13.4 After approval of the allowance, the incumbent must take out a contract with any service provider. The allowance is then paid as the monthly amount due to the service provider, limited to R450.00 per month.

14. EVALUATION CRITERIA

This policy will be evaluated annually to cater for legislative changes and in response to operating changes.

15. PENALTIES

Non-compliance to any of the stipulations contained in this policy will be regarded as misconduct, which will be dealt with in terms of the Disciplinary Code.

16. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If there is a dispute about the interpretation or application of this policy any party may refer the matter to the Head of Department. If the dispute is not successfully resolved it may be resolved through the Municipal Grievance Procedure Policy